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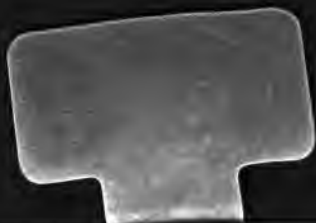
GILES
WITHERNE



280.



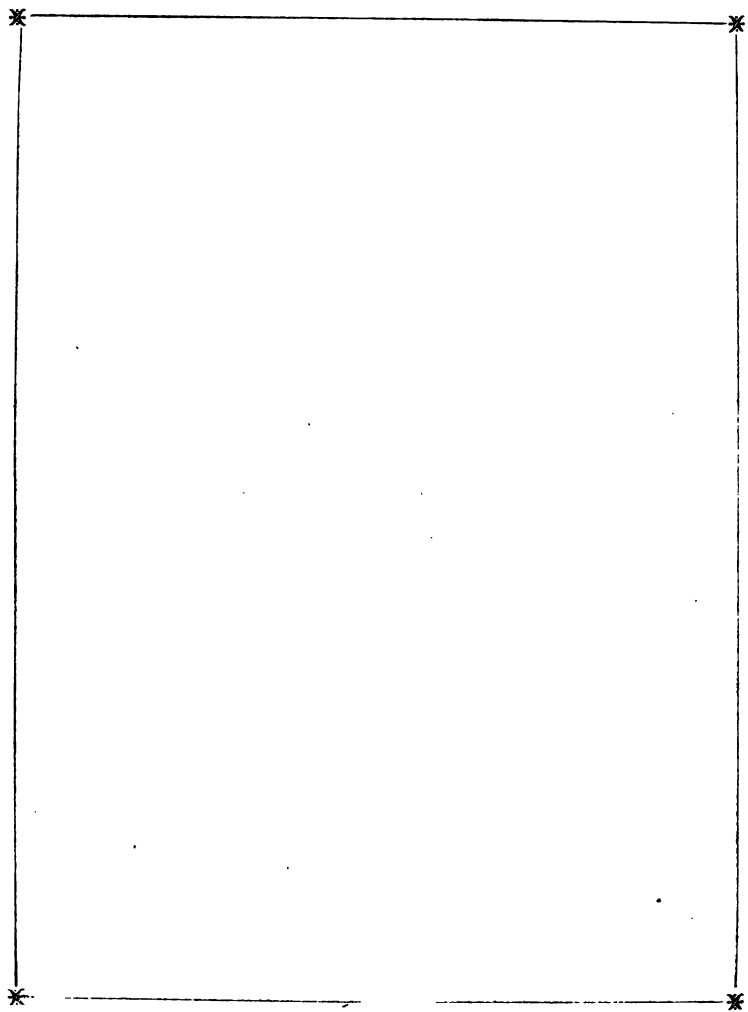
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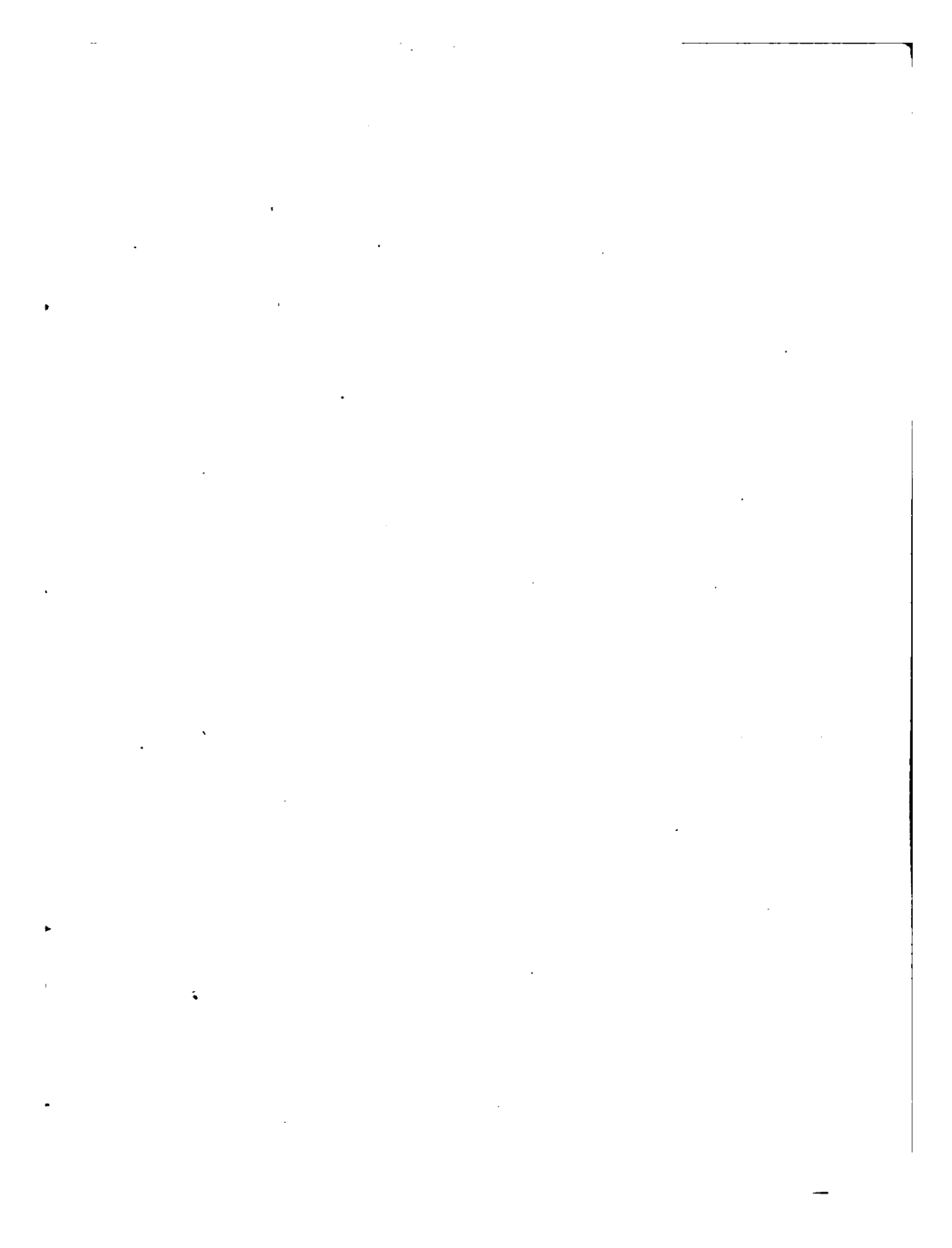




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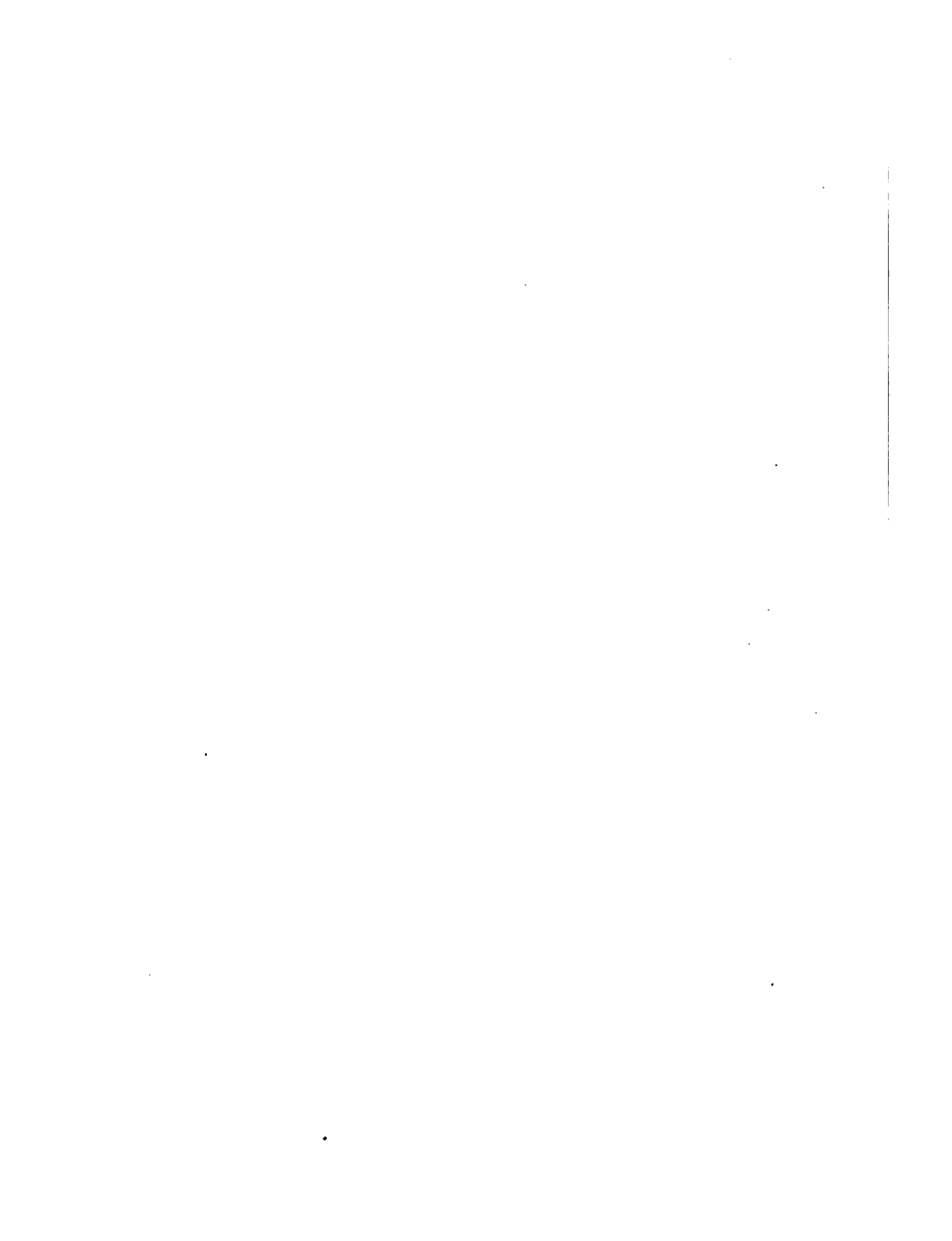








AN OLD MAN, SITTING ON A TOMBSTONE, TELLS THE STORY. *Front.*



Giles Witherne;
OR,
THE REWARD OF DISOBEDIENCE.

A Village Tale for the Young.

BY THE
REV. J. P. PARKINSON, D.C.L.

LATE FELLOW OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD.

SIXTH EDITION.

ILLUSTRATED BY THE REV. F. W. MANN, M.A.

LONDON:
BELL AND DALDY, 186, FLEET STREET.
1863.

280. h 93.

LONDON:
R. CLAY, SON, AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS,
BREAD STREET HILL.



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PSALM CIV. 23.

Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour,
until the evening.

Introduction.

SHARP was the air, the frosted snow
Lay thin upon the ground ;
The standing pool and running stream
With ice alike were bound.

It was the first hard frost that year ;
But yesterday the swain,
Returning from his distant work,
Was drenched with beating rain.

But now, so wonderful the change,
The sky is bright and clear ;
And stars, like purest diamonds, shine
Upon the fading year.

* *
Giles Witherne ; or, the

Ere dawn of day Giles Witherne rose,
And left his lowly bed ;
And, meekly kneeling on his knees,
His morning prayers he said.

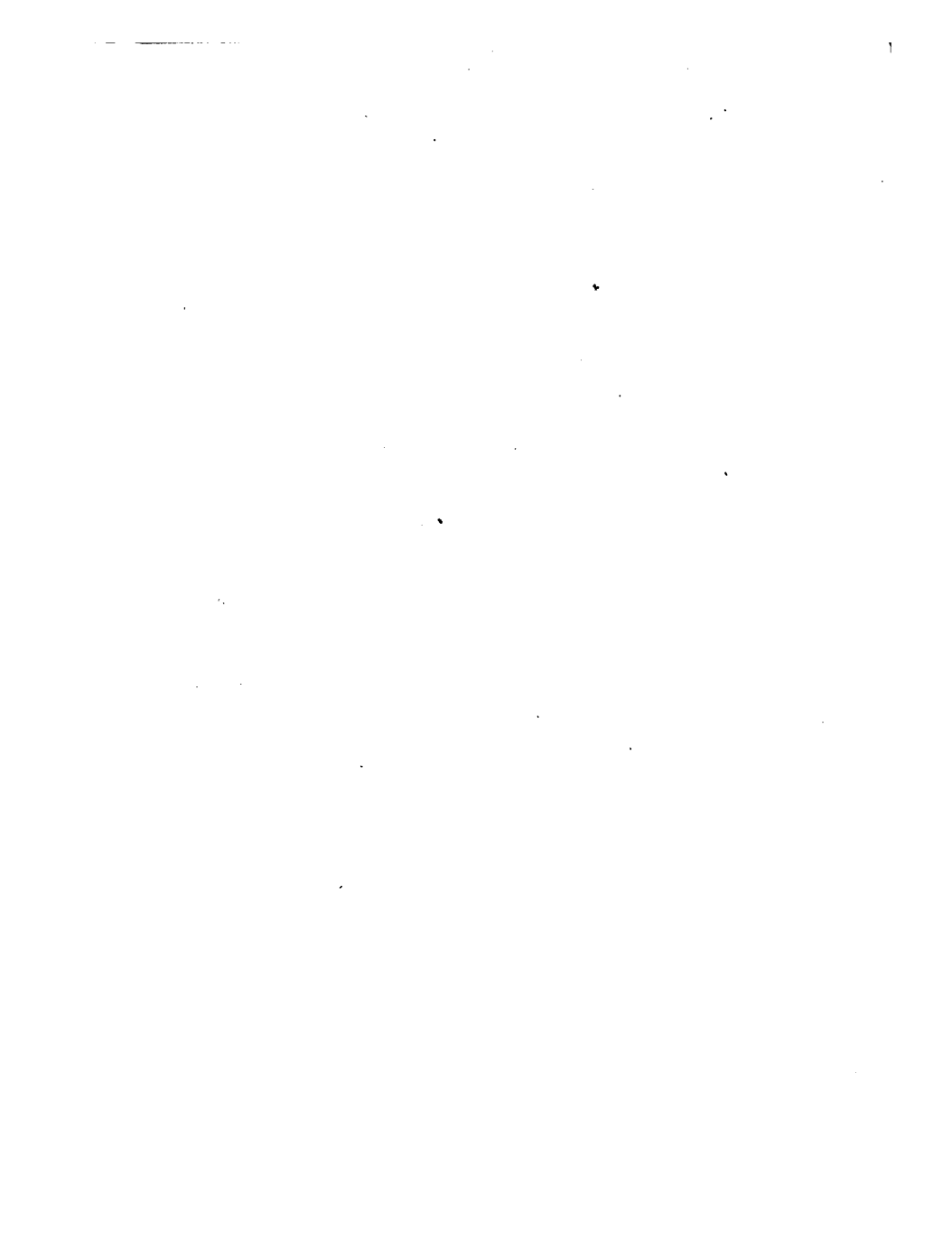
Then, rising to the cares of life,
A hasty meal he takes,
And with a workman's relish keen
His early morsel breaks.

Time presses, and the weary toil
In which he daily lives ;
So, turning kindly to his wife,
This parting charge he gives :

“ Beyond the river, by the mill,
My work is set to-day ;
Short are the hours of toil, and short
Must also be my pay.

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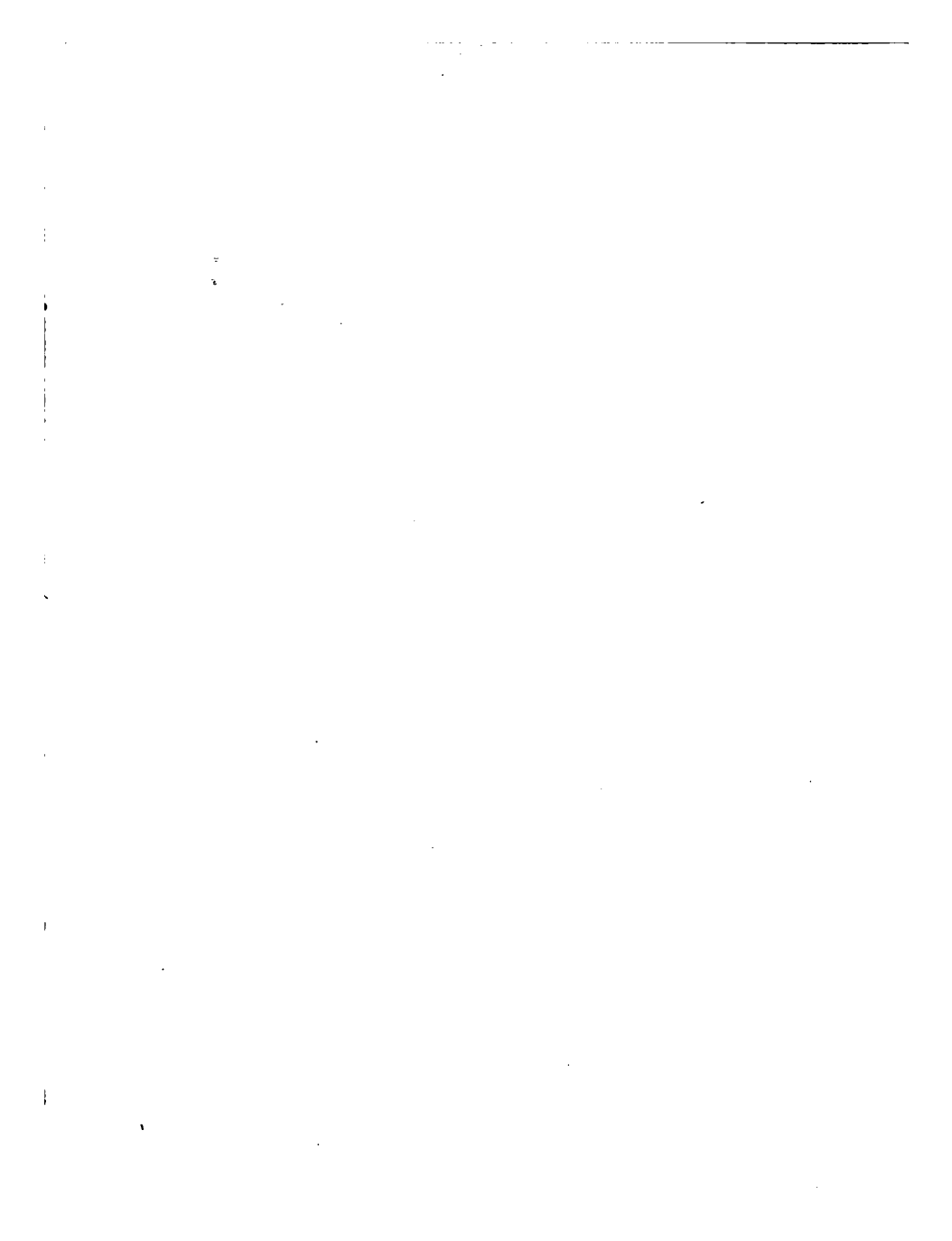
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GILES WITHERNE GOING OUT TO WORK.

P. 8.



✱ ✱

Rebward of Disobedience.

“I'll not return while daylight lasts,
My dinner send at noon ;
Nay, do not, Mary, come yourself,
The boys will step it soon.”

He said, and with his shouldered tools
He left his cottage door ;
And as the sun was up he reached
His work upon the moor.

✱ ✱

PROV. xxvii. 1.

Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not
what a day may bring forth.

PART I.

MARY the while had roused the boys,
And dressed the baby too ;
And notably had finished all
A housewife has to do.

Nor did she e'er forget to pray,
And hear her children's prayers ;
Mindful of Heaven, and heavenly things,
Amidst her worldly cares.

She taught them words of holy prayer,
Herself had learned before,
In childhood's days, and ever since
Had pondered o'er and o'er :

Giles Witherne; or, the

Words deeply fixed upon the heart,
To be her guide and stay ;
Words, as of fire, to light her path,
And point the heavenward way.

Now, thoughts of daily life succeed,
How best she may provide
The frugal meal for him whose work
Is by the river-side.

Of fine bread-flour a cake she made,
Some meat she nicely drest ;
She took some lard, for butter 's dear,
And salt to give it zest.

A linen cloth enfolds the meat,
A basket holds the cloth ;
Beside, her husband's knife she laid,
And jug well filled with broth.

* * *

Reward of Disobedience.

Then to the boys their mother said :

“This to your father take ;
The basket keep upright, and mind
The broth-jug not to break.

“Two roads across the river lead,
One by the little hill ;
The other lower down the stream,
Beyond old Jacklin’s mill.

“Go by the hill, ’tis further round,
But safe the bridge and true ;
If by the ford you try to pass,
Some mischief may ensue.

“Remember, Giles, my timely charge,
And, Martin, mind my word ;
As you regard your mother’s love,
You’ll both avoid that ford.”

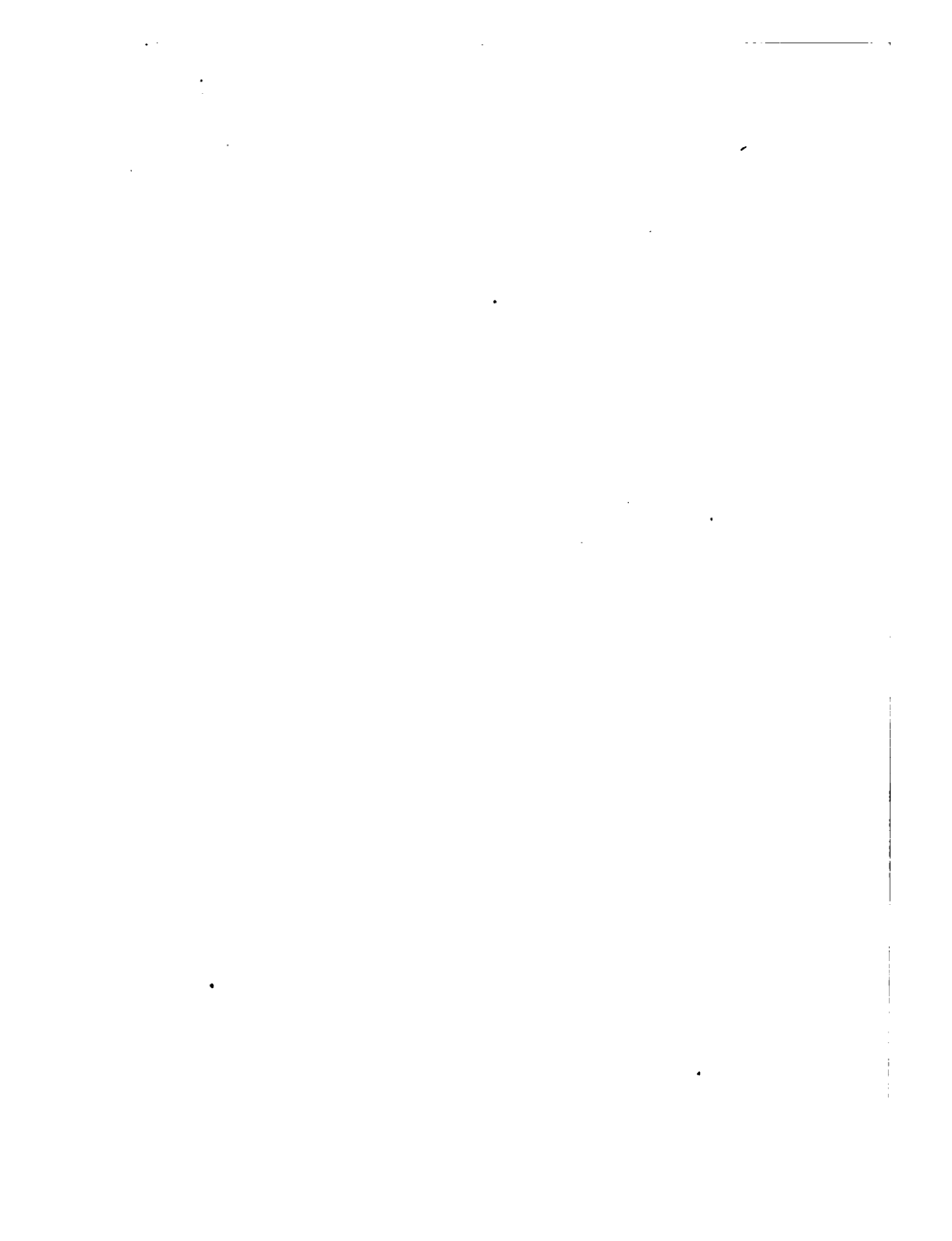
Giles Witherne; or, the

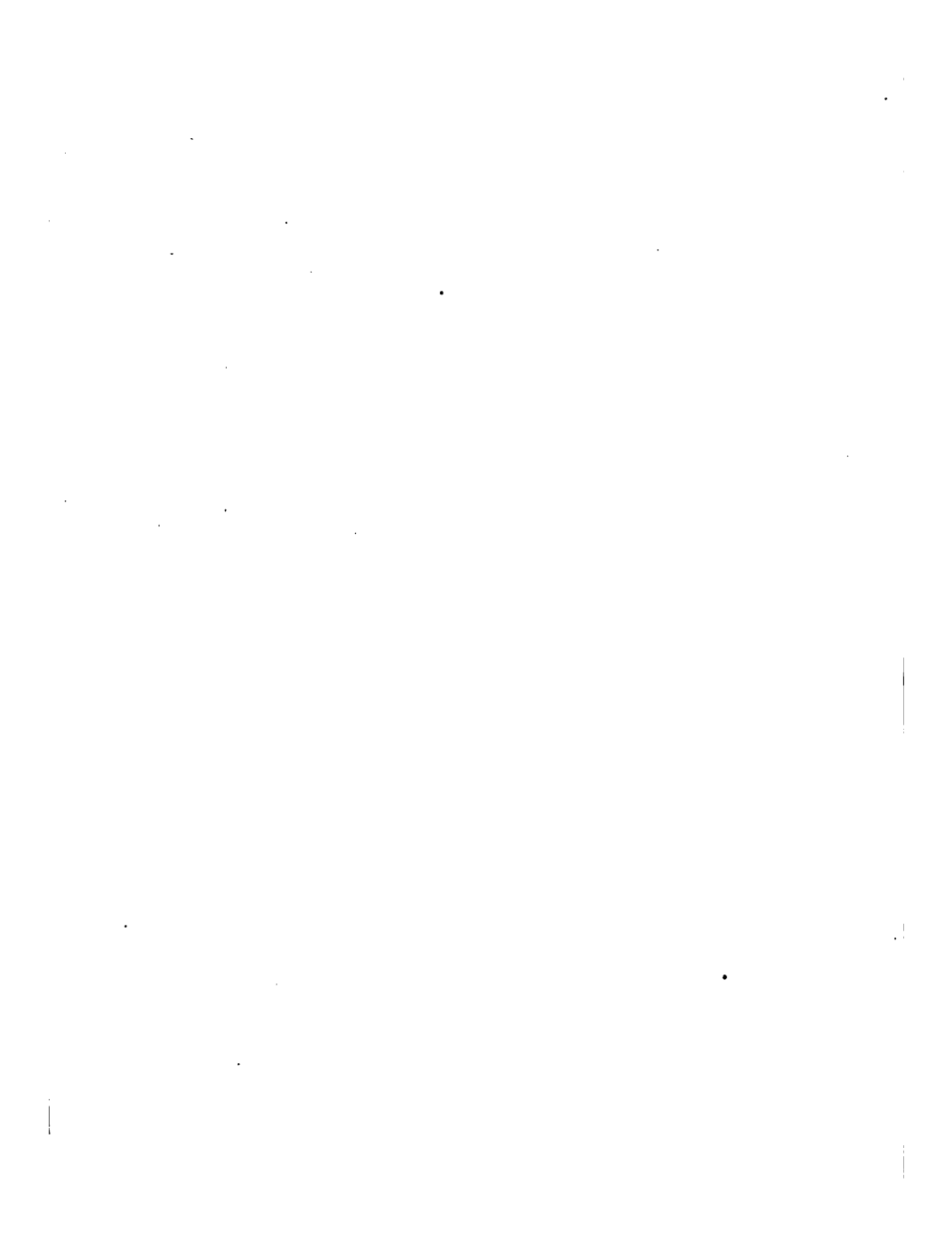
Forth from the cottage speed the boys,
Their bounding hearts "all mirth;"
Just as if Sorrow's haggard form
Had ne'er been seen on earth.

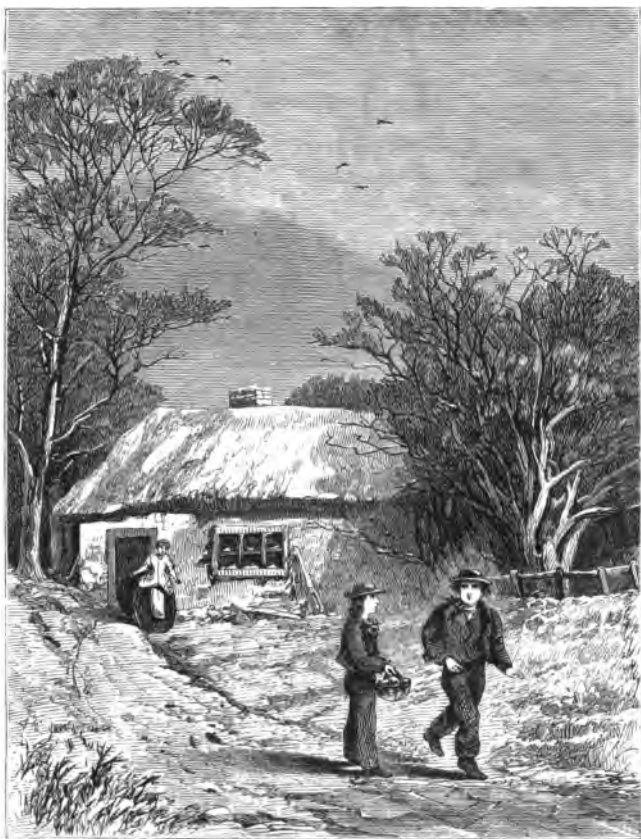
Ten years or so had passed since Giles
The first-born son appeared;
Hardy he was, and strong of limb,
As one in hardness reared.

Reckless withal, of stubborn will,
You saw it in his face;
There, thoughtless daring, rash resolve,
And conscious pride, you trace.

But Martin was of gentler mould,
As brave as was the other;
A thoughtful, mild, and loving child,
More docile than his brother.







THE BOYS LEAVING THE COTTAGE.



Reward of Disobedience.

His curly locks, his mother's pride,
Down to his shoulders fell ;
His ruddy cheek, and full dark eye,
Of youthful vigour tell.

His age was nine ; above his years
Thought had expression given,
That looked beyond this world to God,
To peace with God in heaven.

The basket Martin bore upright,
True to his mother's charge :
Giles jumped and frisked, and played about,
Like a wild dog at large.

The frozen water on the road,
The frozen pools beside ;
The larger patches on the heath,
Invite the tempting slide.

* *
Giles Witherne; or, the

And how the basket kept upright,
And neither youngster fell;
And how the jug escaped unhurt,
Is more than I can tell.

They near the bridge across the stream,
Most rudely built of yore;
Huge timbers, broken from a wreck,
The upper framework bore.

Far out, beneath, as eye can reach,
Swelled by the recent rain,
The little river has become
A wide and watery plain.

The outfall sluices partly drawn,
An under-current flows
Beneath the ice, and, onward borne,
To the far ocean goes.

* *
Reward of Disobedience.

The white fresh waters from the hills
In the mid-stream subside ;
And, parting from the ice, they sink
As sinks the ebbing tide.

Hard by the bank, nor far beyond,
Firm lies the crystal floor ;
But danger lurks beneath your feet,
If once you quit that shore.

Giles first beheld the sparkling plain,
All radiant in the sun ;
And with exulting heart he cried,
“ Here is the place for fun.

“ Come, Martin, come along with me,
We'll have a merry slide ;
Fear not, sure Martin need not fear
When Giles is at his side.”

Giles Witherne; or, the

"I fear not, Giles, yon shining field,
I fear to cross the word,
The parting word, our mother gave,
To shun this very ford.

"Remember, Giles, how sad their fate,
Who at their parents scoff."
"I'll hear no more," Giles stoutly said;
"Hurrah! I'm off, I'm off!"

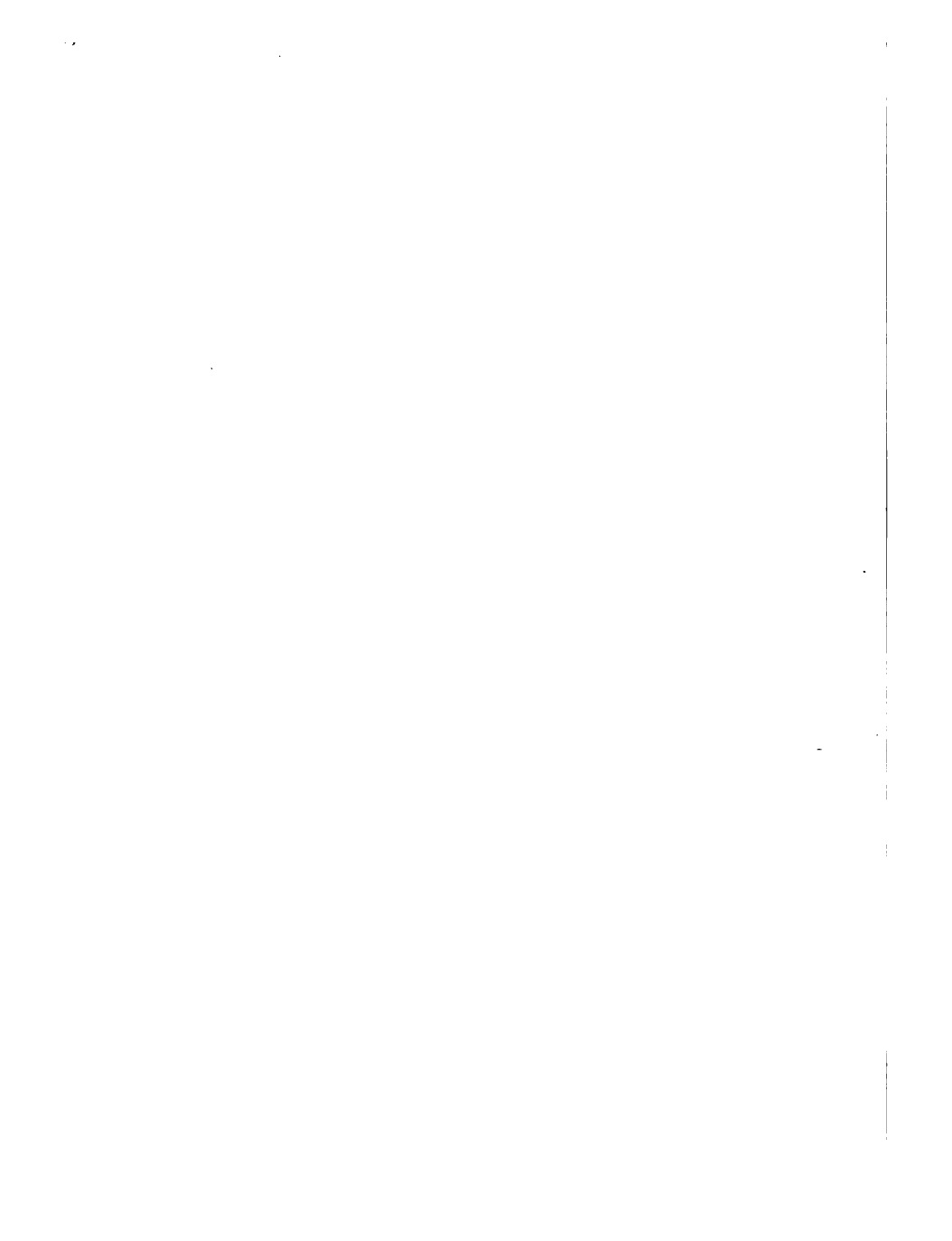
Down from the bridge he quickly speeds,
Firm in his own self-will;
And soon he reaches, soon is on,
The ice below the mill.

One moment all is wildest mirth;
'Tis thus the whirling brain
Attests the maddened bliss of those
Who lawless objects gain.





THE BREAKING OF THE ICE.



✱ ✱
Reward of Disobedience.

The next, and all has passed away,
The piercing bitter cry
Of the poor struggling child is heard,
The wail of agony.

“ Help, Martin, help, or I shall drown,
The ice has broken in ;
Help, Martin, help, or I must die,
The shore I cannot win.”

He heard that voice, the dauntless boy,
He saw his brother's grief ;
And, at his own life's risk, he flew
At once to his relief.

Giles nobly battles with the flood,
For Martin now is near
To lend his ready help, and more,
His fainting heart to cheer.

Giles Witherne; or, the

Their hands are joined, the effort made,
It was not thus to be :
Again the ice gives way, and both
Are plunged in that dark sea.

Beneath the crystal surface hurled,
Locked each on other's breast,
They sunk, and in a moment passed
To their eternal rest.

No cry was heard as they were borne
Beneath the rushing wave ;
But stifled voices seemed to say,
“ Jesu, mercy !—Jesù, save ! ”

Close within sight and sound, there stood
A simple-hearted child ;
Of nature guileless, but of form
And aspect strange and wild.

* * *

Retard of Disobedience.

Quite unobserved he stood and gazed,
An aged thorn between ;
He saw and wondered, but from fear,
Drew back himself unseen.

When first the ice gave way, and Giles
So loudly cried for aid,
Poor Tony stirred not, nor to help
One single effort made.

But when the second crash was heard,
And death's sad work was sped,
Amazed he started as from trance,
And terror-stricken fled.

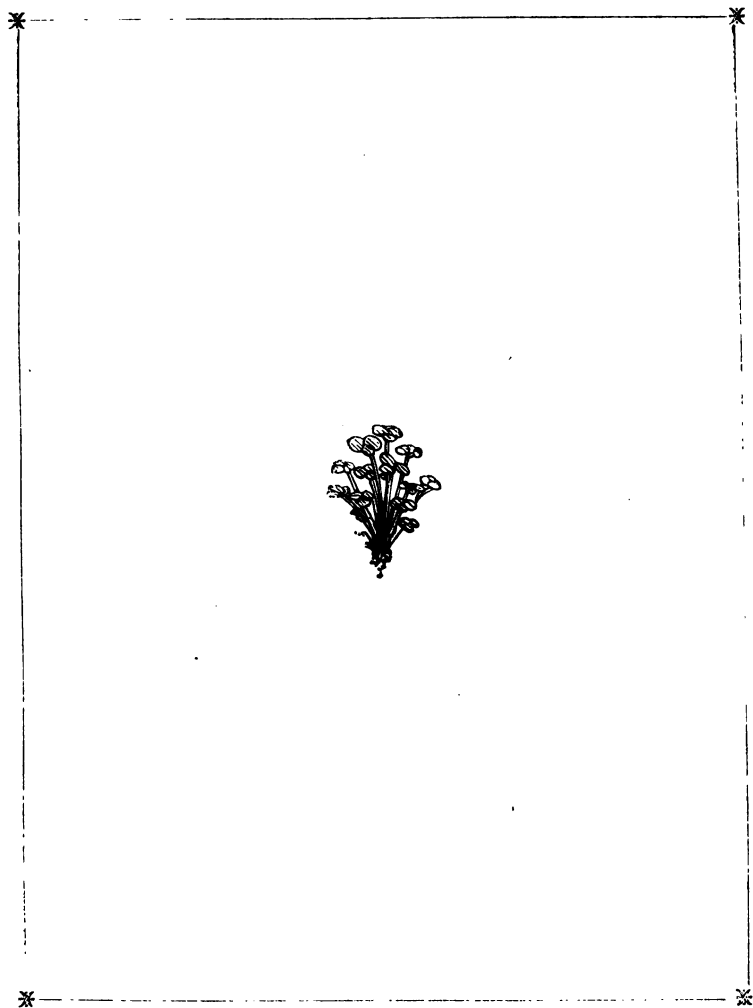
Years rolled away, and none e'er knew
The secret of his heart,
Locked in that wayward breast with none
To bear a friendly part.

Giles Witherne.

Then memory failed, and memory's power
On scenes long-past to dwell ;
What the scared child had seen and heard,
The man could scarcely tell.

But when in death's cold grasp he lay,
One flash of heaven-born light
Struck on his soul, and all the past
Revealed ; then all was night.

Yet still young Giles's dying words
Employed his latest breath ;
" Oh, help me or I drown," he said,
Then calmly sunk in death.



ROM. XII. 10.

Be kindly affectioned one to another with
brotherly love.

PART II.

FROM sunrise to the hour of noon
Giles Witherne plied his spade,
Till four feet deep through sand and clay
A cutting he had made.

Wide at the top, and tapering down,
The hardest is the toil,
When space is wanting, or to stand,
Or shift the lower soil.

But skill will do where strength would fail,
And Giles had strength and skill,
The several branches of the trade
Of a gripper to fulfil.

* * * * *

Giles Witherne ; or the

Others might work as hard as he,
But few could work as well ;
Last year he won the prize, and beat
The far-famed Adam Bell.

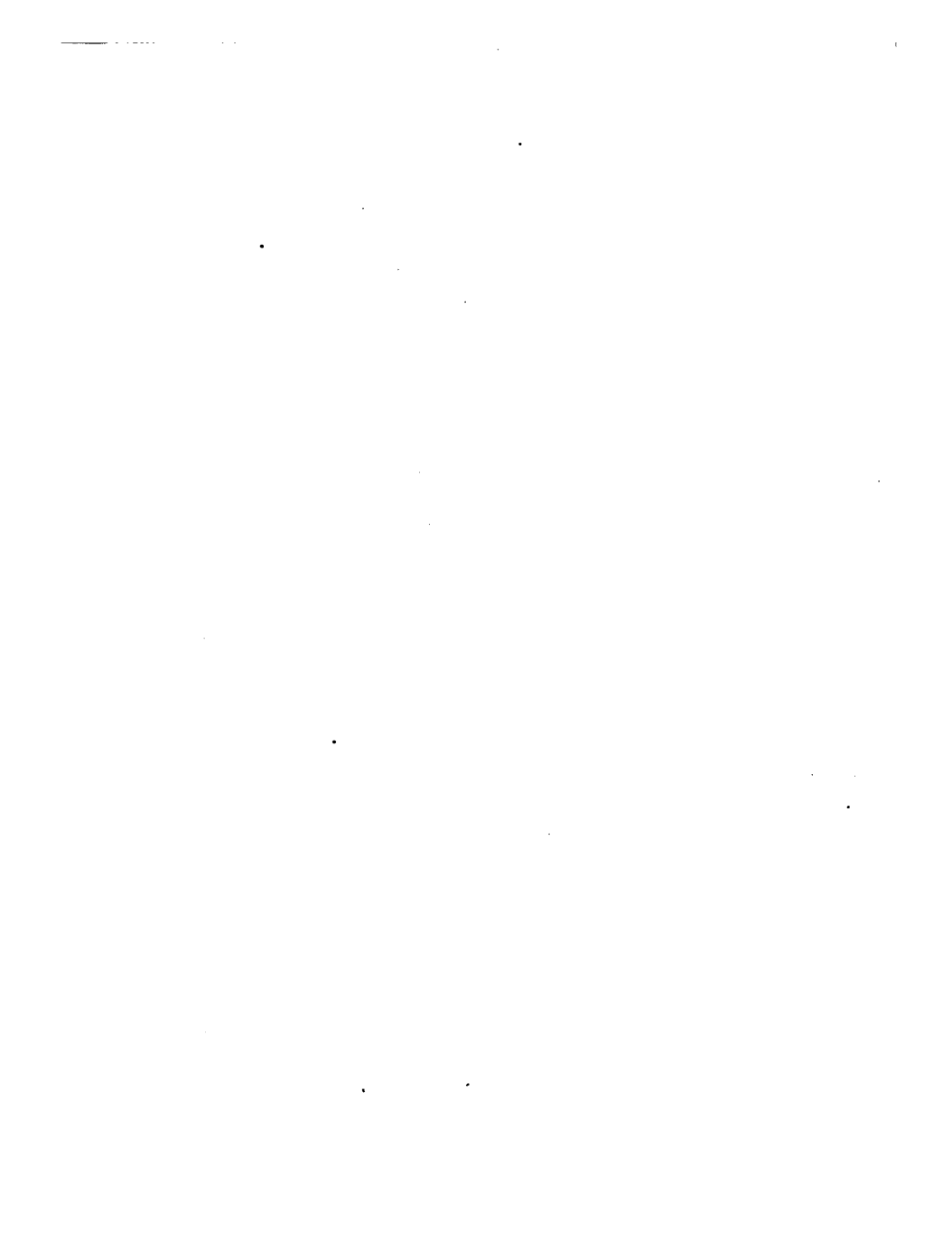
Yet strength and skill howe'er combined,
Man is exhausted soon ;
And Giles, like others, felt the pang
Of hunger keen at noon.

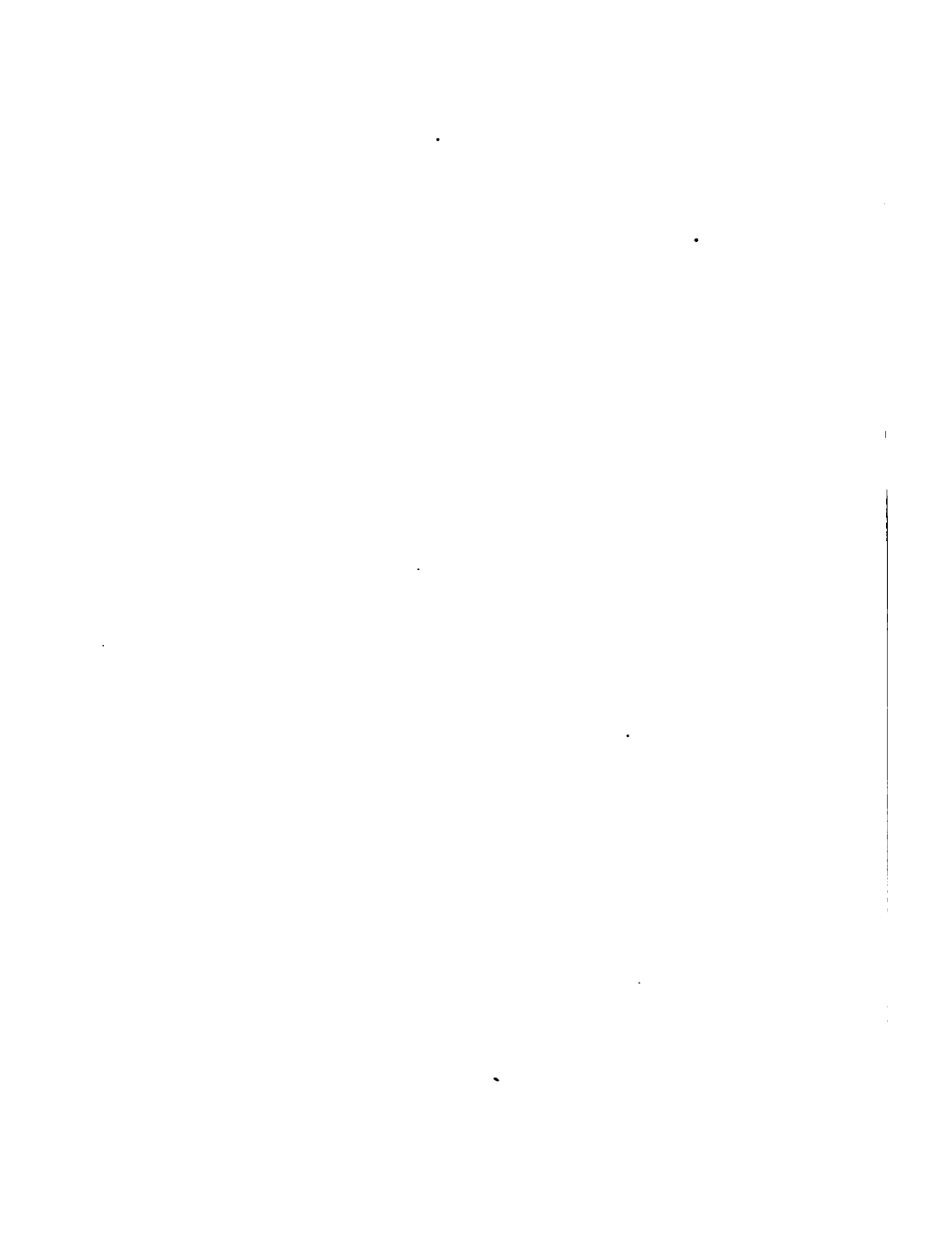
" Where are the boys ?" Giles Witherne said,
" They're just like all the rest ;
I'm sure that Mary sent them on,
But boys are boys at best.

" This frosty morn they've had their fun,
And doubtless had their slide ;
And so the basket and its store
I fear are laid aside.



THE DINNER OF THE WORKMEN AT NOON.





Reward of Disobedience.

“ Or haply they have missed their way :
Who knows ? They’ve had a fall ;
And in the crash together lie
The basket, jug, and all.”

His mates, though rough, were kindly men,
And gave him of the best
Of all their baskets, or their jugs,
Or drinking-horns possess.

And many a joke is passed around,
And sounds the merry laugh ;
As the short and grimy pipe they smoke,
And the sober liquor quaff.

Again to work till fleecy clouds
Receive the setting sun,
Half-grieved to veil his gleaming rays,
So short the race he’s run.

Giles Witherne; or, the

Giles hies him homewards, ill at ease;
Spite of himself, his mind;
But still he trusts in God, and hopes
All right at last to find.

His home in sight, with quicker step
He onward makes his way;
And now his anxious, throbbing heart
Brooks not a moment's stay.

He runs, he opens wide the door,
And Mary finds alone;
And a father's fears at once betrays
His agitated tone.

“What, all alone? Where are the boys?
Where are the boys, I say?
I have not, Mary, seen the boys
Since I left home to-day.”

Reward of Disobedience.

“ Long, long ago, they went from home,
I sent them in good time ;
'Twas half-past ten by the village clock,
I knew it by the chime.

“ I thought, as they remained, no doubt
They would return with you ;
But now I know not what to think,
I know not what to do.”

Giles makes inquiries everywhere :
“ Who, neighbours, who has seen
My thoughtless youngsters ; who can tell
Where the poor lads have been ? ”

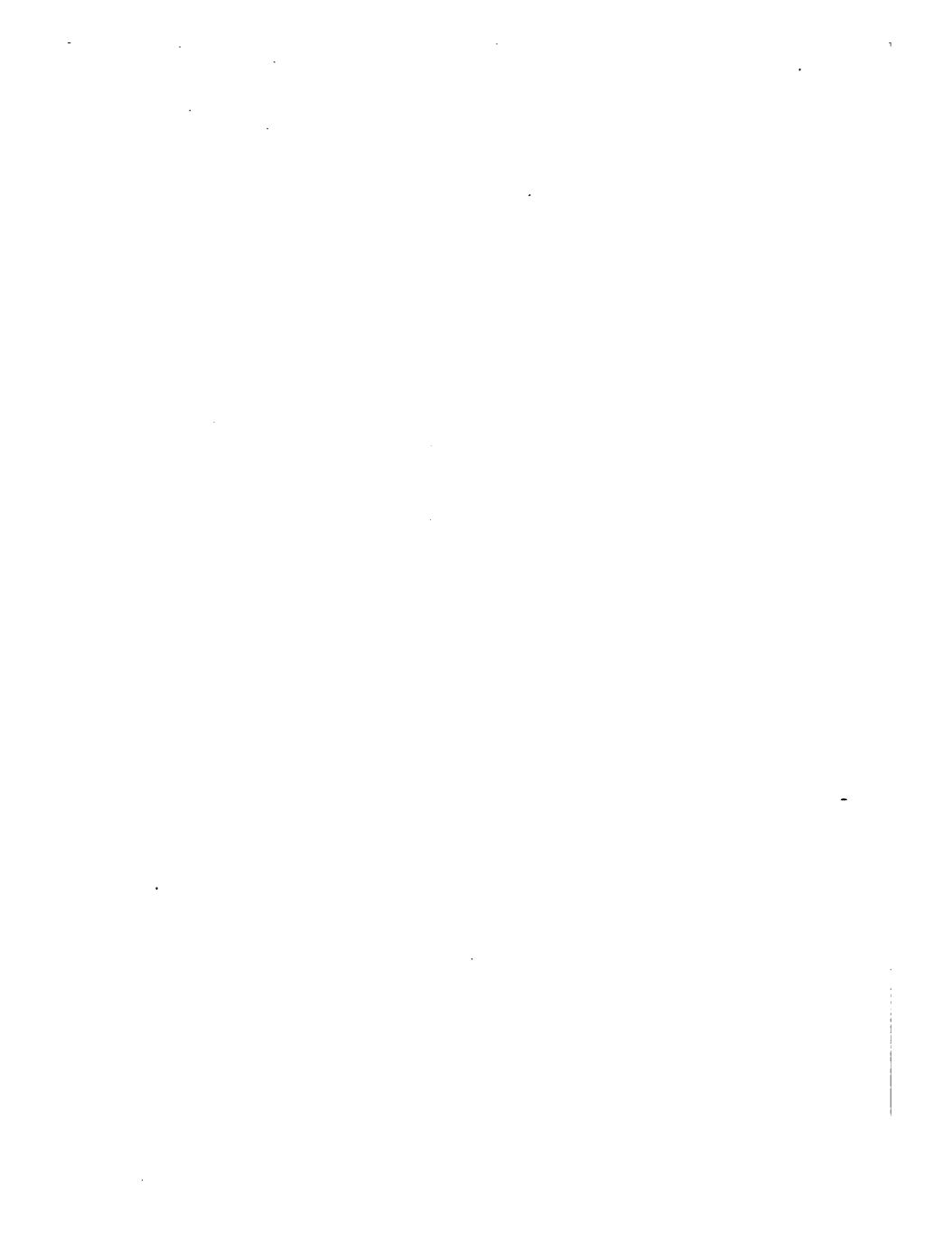
All, all in vain, not one for far
Their wanderings could trace ;
Though most had in its outset seen
Their joyous morning's race.

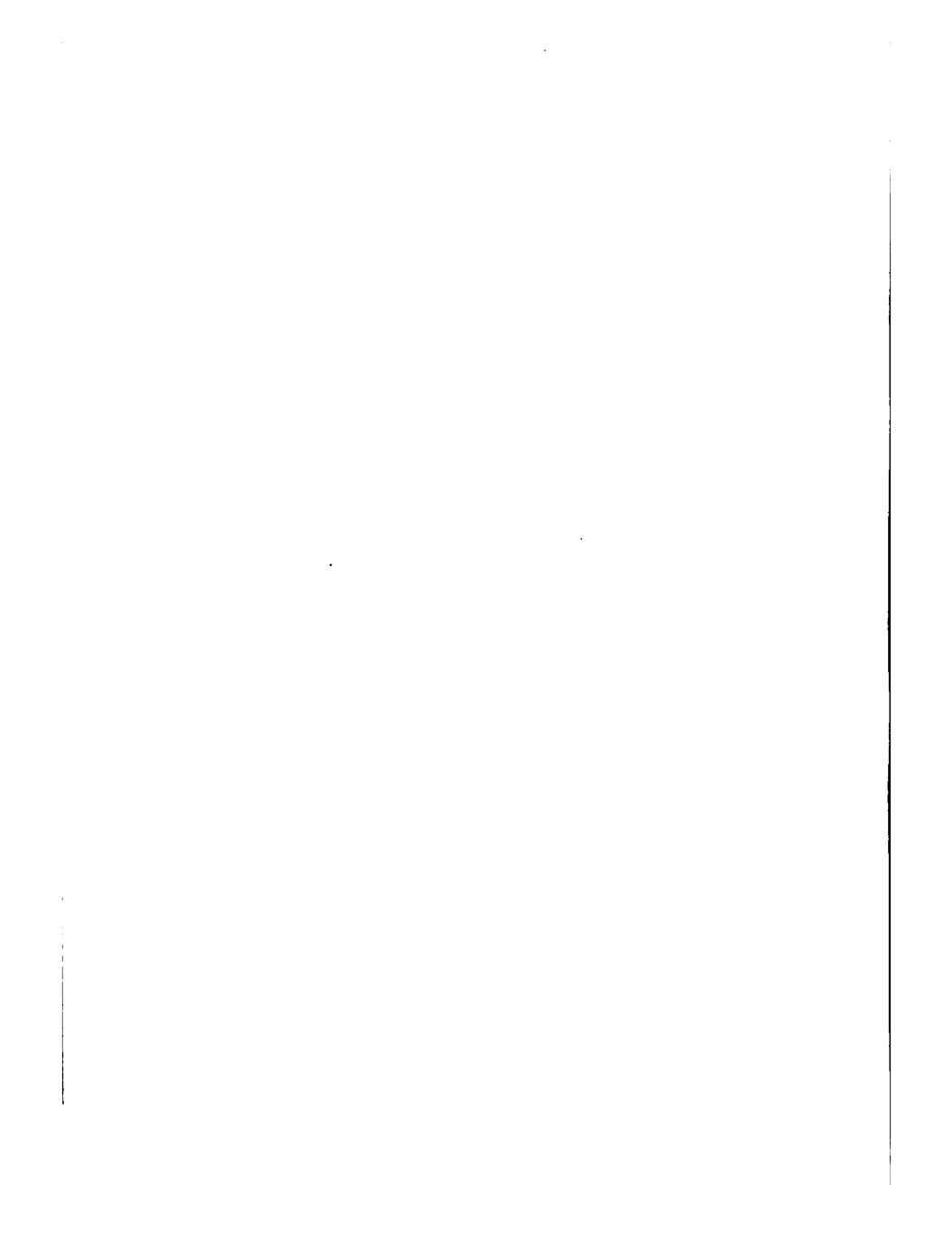
Giles Witherne.

Sad he returns, and sick of heart,
But search is now in vain ;
For darkling is the night, and cold,
And the frost gives way to rain.

'Tis drizzling fast, and slow descends,
And then succeeding showers ;
At last, as stormy gusts prevail,
In torrents down it pours.

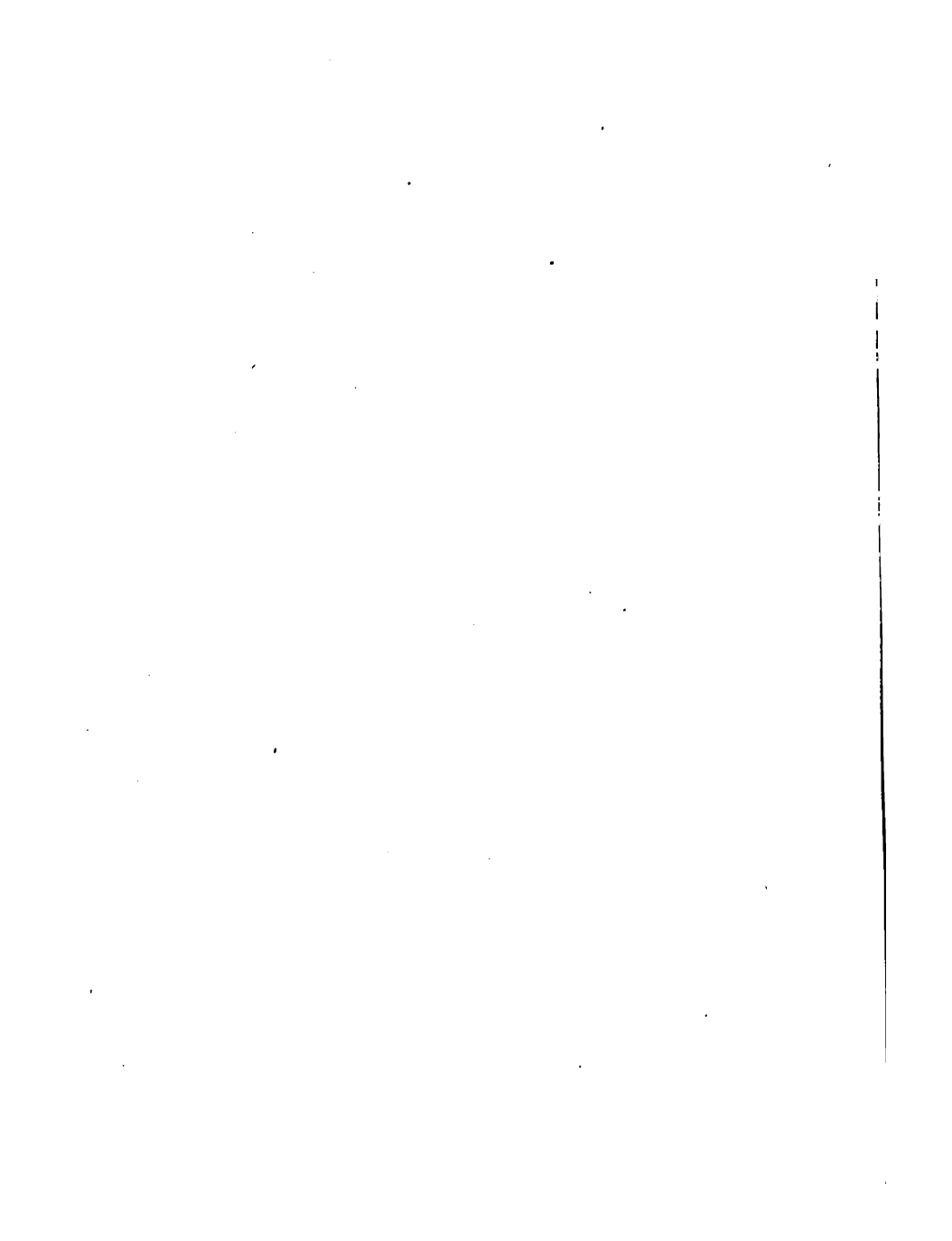
In anguish, and in weariness,
Is past that restless night ;
And Giles and Mary count the hours,
And sigh for morning's light.







GILES AND MARY WAITING FOR THE MORNING LIGHT.





JOB 1. 21.

The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away:
blessed be the name of the Lord.

PART III.

AND now the swelling river stream
Sweeps o'er the adjoining mead,
And from the depth below brings down
Whole beds of muddy weed.

Wrapt tightly in a weedy shroud,
And gently brought to land,
Two childlike corpses, stiff in death,
Are cast upon the strand.

'Tis midnight now, the rain abates,
Less fiercely sweeps the gale,
And o'er the desolation round
Is heard the night-wind's wail.

* * *
Giles Witherne; or, the

Ere morning breaks, the stream has left
Those weed-girt corpses dry,
Just where the river bends its course,
And the shelving bank is high.

It chanced that morning with the dawn
A shepherd came that way,
To mark the flood, and watch the flock,
Lest into harm they stray.

A trusty helpmate by his side
Observed his voice and eye,
The distant sheep to gather in,
Or at his feet to lie.

The flock is safe, though drenched with wet,
And penned on higher ground;
And now the loving pair approach
The river, homeward bound.

* * *
Reward of Disobedience.

The dog runs forward to the bend
Hard by the foaming tide ;
And, scenting onwards, stands at last
Upon the river-side.

He stands beside the weedy shroud,
He sees the boys in death ;
Their cold and pallid cheeks are warmed
For a moment by his breath.

He licks their hands, he tears the weed,
He tries to rouse the dead ;
Poor beast, he will not, cannot know
Their earthly course is sped.

But still uneasy and perplexed,
The attempt to rouse them vain,
The moaning whine, the dismal howl,
Attest his grief and pain.

Giles Witherne; or, the

'Tis said that Martin often stroked
Poor Jasper's curly head;
And now a bone had given, and now
With dainty bits had fed.

Roused by the dog's sad moan the herd
Draws near the fatal place;
Marks well the bodies, and essays
Their lineaments to trace.

"Why, these are Witherne's boys," he said,
"Here lying on the ground:
They've vainly tried to cross the ford,
And surely have been drowned.

"I'll seek assistance at the mill,
'Tis but a short half-mile;
And, Jasper, down, lie down, I say,
And guard them well the while."

Retard of Disobedience.

With hasty step, and anxious heart,
But with a right good will,
The shepherd keeps the river-bank,
And quickly nears the mill.

There Giles and Mary long before
The break of day had been ;
But neither Jacklin nor his man
The little boys had seen.

They searched the bank above the mill,
They searched the lower shore ;
And lying there untouched they find
The basket and its store.

Now doubly are their fears aroused :
“The boys,” they say, “were there ;
The basket proves it ; but, alas !
Where are they now ?—oh where ?”

Giles Witherne; or, the

Giles looks around, no sound appears,
When in the grey dull light,
Upon his friendly errand bent,
The shepherd comes in sight.

Poor Mary saw him first, for quick
And restless was her eye;
With frenzied look she clasped his hands
In speechless agony.

The shepherd's feeling heart was touched,
Quick came the deep-heaved sigh;
And with choked utterance he said,
"I'll show you where they lie."

With haste, with bated breath they go,
They utter not a word;
All hope is banished, in despair
They leave the fatal ford.

* * *
Reward of Disobedience.

And now they've reached the river bend,
And Jasper pricks his ears ;
He sees the mournful train approach,
His master's footsteps hears.

Close by the bodies Jasper lay,
And had licked their faces clean ;
And, as if warmth to each he'd give,
Had laid him down between.

Giles in a moment saw the worst,
And with uplifted eye,
And solemn voice, he meekly said,
" God's will be done on high !

" God in his goodness gave the lads,
Whom now He takes away :
To Him in grief, as erst in joy,
This grief of griefs I'll pray."

Giles Witherne; or, the

But Mary could not yet believe
Her children both were dead;
They looked so calm as if they slept,
The river-weed their bed.

She kissed their cheeks, she pressed their hands,
She chafed them in her own;
But warmth returned not, they were cold,
Cold as the coldest stone.

“Oh wake, my pretty Giles,” she said,
“And oh return with me;
The pride, the darling of my heart,
For ever shalt thou be.

“Come, rouse thee, Martin, wet and cold,
And clammy is thy face;
But yet, amidst the wet and cold,
Thy sunny smile I trace.

Retard of Disobedience.

“Can this be death? It cannot be;
For death is terror-clad,
When limbs are stiffened, and the face
Is agonized and sad.”

Giles gently took her by the hand,
And turned her head away,
From where beside the river bend
Their dearest children lay :

Then led her homeward, for he feared
The morning's damp and chill
Might on her feeble, famished frame
Work out some fearful ill.

The friendly shepherd in his arms,
Behind, poor Martin bears ;
While Giles's corse from Jacklin's man
The like kind office shares.

1 THESS. IV. 14.

If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them
also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

PART IV.

A WINTER's day is past and gone ;
Another's well-nigh sped,
And the sad mourners soon must take
Their last look at the dead :

(It is the day of holy rest,
When all who will may share
The blessings which our God bestows
Upon united prayer.)

Their solemn verdict yesternight,
Twelve good and true men found ;
And they returned (what could they else ?)
That the poor boys were drowned.

Giles Witherne; or, the

But by what chance it so befell,
They cannot clearly show ;
And further in a case of doubt
A jury may not go.

They little thought, they could not know,
How wilful Giles had been ;
And Martin's daring, Martin's love,
But one alone had seen.

Their deaths mysterious, ever fresh
Their memories remain ;
The secret told, and all is grief,
And endless is the pain.

'Tis well that of these secret things
To know is rarely given ;
What is revealed is ours, the rest
We leave to God in Heaven.

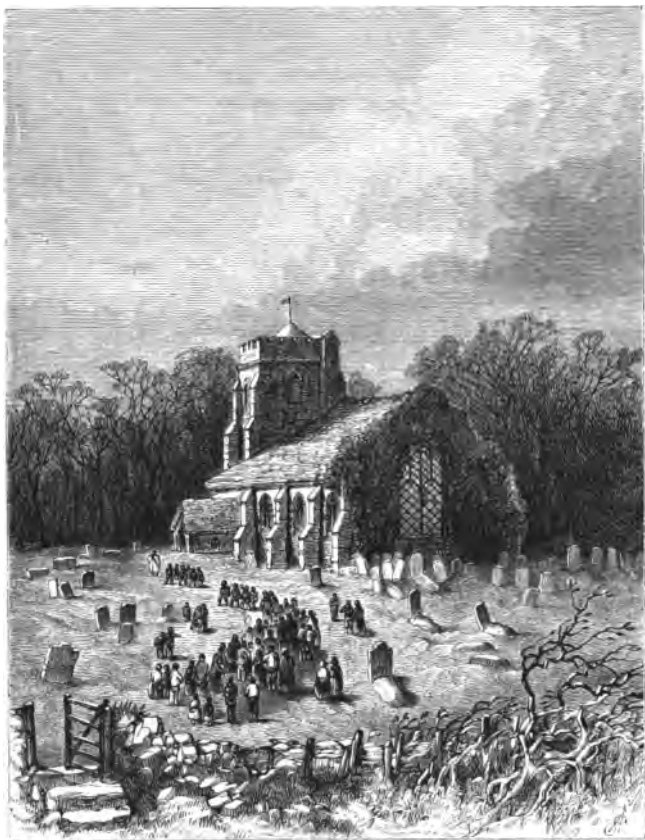
Retard of Disobedience.

And now the village clock strikes four,
The bell begins to toll
Its solemn warning, would they hear,
To every thoughtless soul.

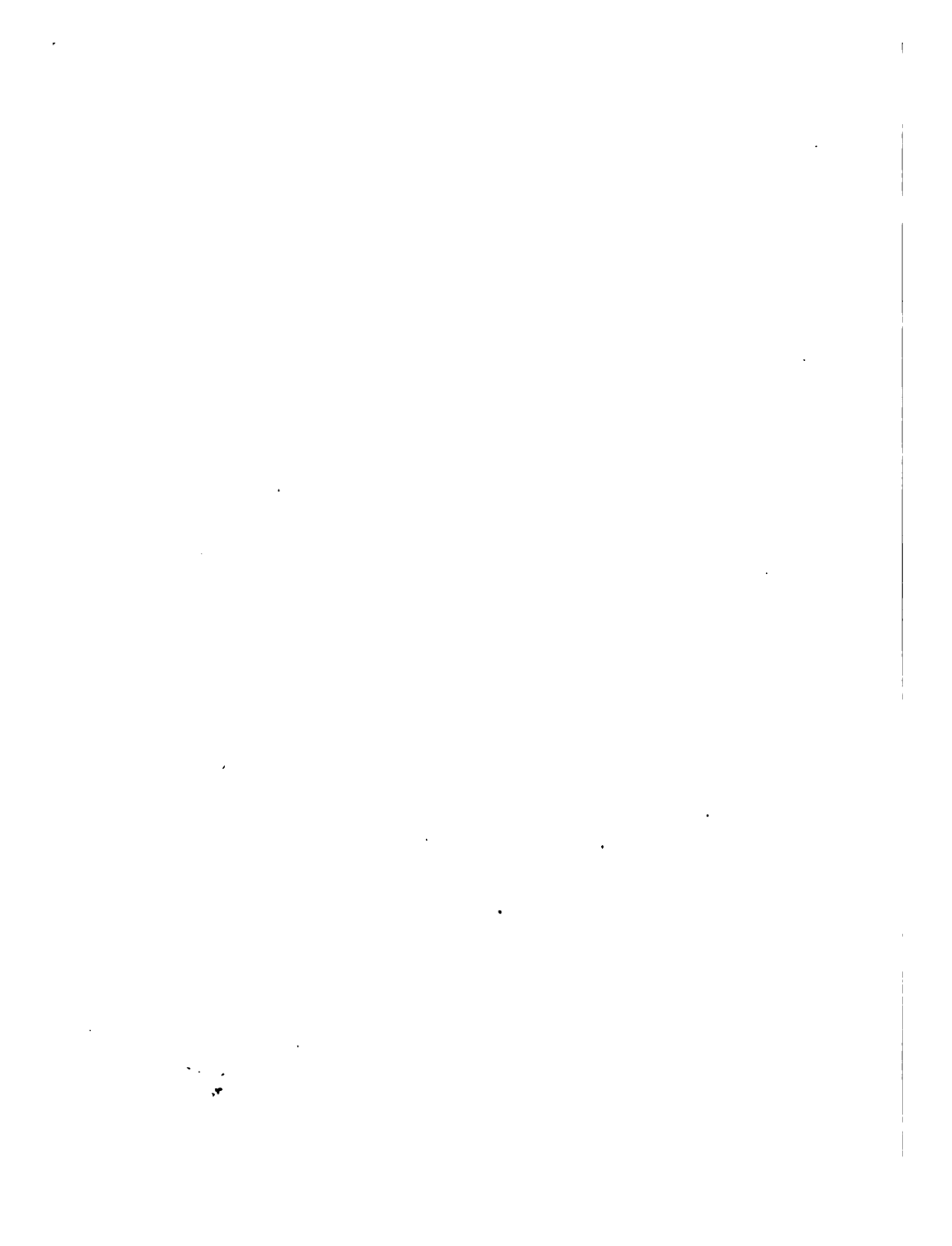
The funeral train, its number swelled
Alike by rich and poor,
Has left, with measured step and slow,
That lowly cottage door.

The good old Rector, robed in white,
Among the first was there;
Mild were his features, kind his eye,
And silvery was his hair.

Next came the coffins, each of elm,
Well seasoned, strongly made;
No tinsel trimmings on the sides
Or on the lids were laid.



THE OLD VILLAGE CHURCH, WITH PROCESSION OF VILLAGERS. P. 41.



* * *

Reward of Disobedience.

Poor Mary wept, but not aloud,
Hers was a chastened grief ;
The drops that coursed each other down,
Flowed to her soul's relief.

Next to the mourners, two and two,
Young boys and girls came on ;
They thought of other days, and wept
For the spirits that were gone.

They thought of other days when Giles
Was foremost in their play ;
And who would ever care for sport,
When Martin was away ?

The village choir in order next,
No flag or banner flying ;
But mournful music on the breeze
Now rising and now dying.

Giles Witherne; or, the

And last the village throng draws near,
And swells the long array;
Order and silence reigned o'er all,
And sorrow too, that day.

Hush! the funeral rites begin,
Methinks I hear the strain
Of childlike voices heavenward rise,
Then echo back again.

Hard as a stone that heart must be,
That could refuse a sigh,
When plaintive notes like these recall
Its own mortality.

The voices cease; they gain the church,
They tread the northern door:
On trestles are the coffins laid,
Just raised above the floor.

Retard of Disobedience.

Next solemn words of import high
From Holy Writ are read,
Which tell of love divine, and cheer
The mourners for the dead.

Besides the Rector's earnest tones
Was heard no other sound ;
So still the people, you might hear
A pin drop on the ground.

The lesson's read, the book is closed,
And hark ! with low-breathed notes
The village organ's mournful strain
O'er aisle and transept floats.

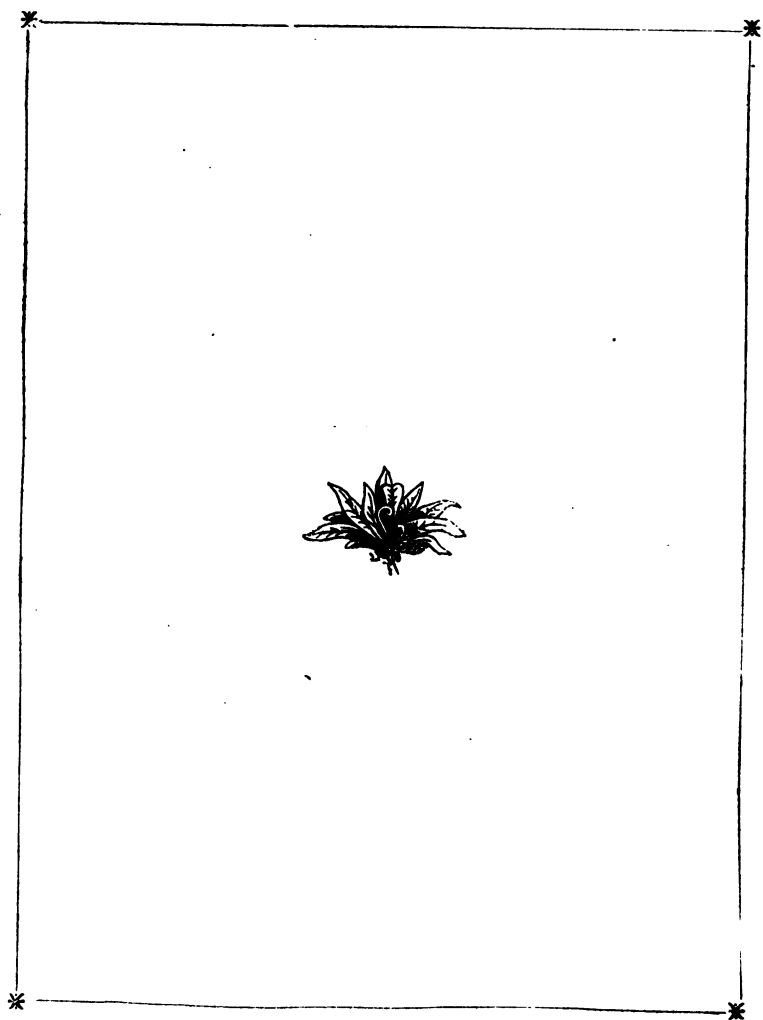
And now, as standing by the grave,
The last sad words are spoken,
They fall with crushing weight to whelm
Hearts that were well-nigh broken.

Giles Milborne.

Then one full burst of grief was heard,
In faith and holy trust,
When earth was given to its earth,
And dust to kindred dust.

'Twas Nature's voice ; for Nature shrinks
To hear of her decay ;
And Grace alone can dare to name
The Resurrection-day.

Then all was hushed again, and calm,
And Sorrow's accents cease ;
For she has heard the parting words,
That bid her go in peace.



2 SAM. I. 23.

Lowly and pleasant in their lives, in their death they were
not divided.

Conclusion.

STAY yet a while, and you shall see
Where Giles and Martin lie :
Yon mouldering turf alone recalls
Their fleeting memory.

Thus time oft dulls the edge of grief,
And curbs the stubborn will ;
But to my heart that scene of woe
Is fresh and present still.

South of the church they made the grave,
To catch the mid-day sun :—
There's room enough and, while there's room,
The dreary North they shun.

Giles Witherne.

Full five feet deep beneath the sod,
They placed them side by side ;
Those who in life had loved so well,
E'en death would not divide.

There let them rest ; and while in peace
That lowly bed they share,
Ours be the warning from their fate,
ONE FAULT HAS LAID THEM THERE.

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